REMARKS

This is in response to the Office Action dated May 27, 2003. The election previously made is hereby affirmed.

Initially, it is noted that in the Office Action the Examiner requested that applicant cancel all claims, and renumber the elected claims so as to bring the claim numbering into conformance with U.S. practice. We have done this herein. The non-elected claims (i.e., original method claims 1, 3, 12 and 13) have been canceled without prejudice in view of the Restriction Requirement.

The Examiner has indicated that original claims 5, 17, 6, 14, 15, 16, 8, 10, 9, 11 and 18 contain allowable subject matter. We have rewritten these claims herein to overcome the Section 112 issues, as new claims 19-29, respectively. Thus, new claims 19-29 are in condition for allowance.

New claims 30-34 have also been added. These new claims are respectfully submitted to be in condition for allowance for at least the following reasons.

New claim 30 requires the use of aerobic microorganisms along with packing material comprising vinylidene chloride in neutralizing organic alkaline wastewater (e.g., see vinylidene chloride packing material 10 in various figures of the instant application). The cited art fails to disclose or suggest at least this aspect of new claim 30. For example, as explained by the Examiner on page 4 of the Office Action, JP 2000-117276 fails to disclose or suggest such a packing material comprising vinylidene chloride.

New claim 31 requires means for receiving alkaline wastewater with a pH of 12 or higher and comprising TMAH (tetramethylammonium hydroxide) including a nitrogen compound(s); and means for neutralizing the alkaline wastewater at least by using aerobic microorganisms so that at least some of the TMAH is decomposed into nitric acid (e.g., see pg. 3, paragraphs [0010] and [0011] of the instant specification). Again, the cited art fails to disclose or suggest this aspect of new claim 31.

New claim 33 requires a tank which receives both organic wastewater including nitrogen and inorganic alkaline wastewater so that the organic wastewater including nitrogen and inorganic alkaline wastewater are mixed in the tank and aerobic microorganisms are propagated for microbiologically producing nitric acid ions from organic matters thereby neutralizing the wastewater (e.g., see Fig. 2). Again, the cited art fails to disclose or suggest the invention of new claim 33 in at least this respect.

For at least the foregoing reasons, it is respectfully requested that all rejections be withdrawn. All claims are in condition for allowance. If any minor matter remains to be resolved, the Examiner is invited to telephone the undersigned with regard to the same.

Respectfully submitted,

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